

Book Review: Information Systems Management In Practice

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BOOK REVIEW

This comprehensive overview to information systems management is an enhanced version of an original title regularly updated since its original format more than ten years ago. Its expanded format successfully guides the student reader through a basic introduction to aspects of information technology both within systems and as systems in their own right. Using case-driven analyses in order to explore examples, the authors have striven to make sure that this edition is as comprehensive as possible. A chapter on the digital economy, for example, now reflects the changing face of distributed systems and distributed computing. This offers a more fair balance to the use of standard material, such as managing system development.

More vital to such a standard form textbook aimed at students, however, is the inclusion of material that encourages the consideration of further topics within the same sphere, such as issues within the information management discipline. In encouraging outreach between disciplines which both encounter information systems management, a cohesive basis for a learning strategy has been emphasised which can produce positive collaborations between formerly distant subject areas.

In recent years, management of information security – especially issues regarding personal data theft – have become an increasingly important topic. This has occurred not only within the discipline of IS, but within related disciplines, such as records management. It would be encouraging to find that the practical outcomes of the role of IS design in terms of the fundamentals of information security by architecture were being represented in the taught concepts of IS. Sadly, this is not explored within the text, but could prove promising for a further edition. Whilst many varieties of networks – both historical and modern - are discussed in terms of their utility and architecture, little is said about the potential problems with the drafting and construction of such systems. This is possibly an area of expansion for a future edition, and would be appreciated by both information management professionals and others from the specialised areas of librarianship and archives, finance, and medical sciences.

As media concerns grow with the practical concerns of data and information management both in the UK and USA, such a text is both timely and relevant for not only IS professionals, but also for another audience. Whilst the title of ‘information professional’ is becoming wider and more encompassing – the academic discipline of the IS professional and their role in business may not be fully recognised or appreciated. This text, then, should be recommended as a basic text for those unfamiliar with the work of the IS technician, the systems analyst or IT worker within business. As a reflection of the wider awareness of the importance of information and knowledge management in business, two chapters in particular stand out as key reading for the target student audience. Supporting IT-enabled collaboration, and knowledge management are wide topics with a firm basis in professional progression of IS. There are overlaps of subjects with many other disciplines, and within both science and business cases, these show the wideness and diversity of the relevance of these topics.

The construction of the chapters is a positive learning mechanism for students at any level. Case studies show the direct life-relevance to the discussed IS mechanisms, and allow for a longer discussion of relevant issues. Exercises and review – discussion questions at the end of each chapter look to enhance reader awareness of the text, whilst encouraging individual development by readers seeking out their own examples through business and other potential, real-life cases.

Although the overall presentation of the text is clear, text within illustrations and diagrams is quite compact, which can limit the impact of including such detailed pictures and charts. Graphically, backgrounds for text within case studies are subtly shaded grey to highlight and separate pieces within chapters unobtrusively. The choice of halftones and a monochrome text layout makes for an uncluttered reading, and assists with reproducibility and overall legibility. However, though some may find the repetition of chapter contents on each first page of benefit, it can also distract the reader from approaching the whole book smoothly as a holistic text. This is the book’s major approach: units as chapters are a common concept, and whilst this book does not move away from that in any great measure, it provides more case-study based content integrated within each unit than commonly found.

Overall, this is a thorough and standard text for basic awareness of IS management and issues surrounding current IS practice. Its main highlights are the currency of the topics chosen, its proactive approach to drawing the attention of the reader out towards real-life IS practices, and its firm basis of observations rooted in practice. It is hoped that this volume could also be recommended transdisciplinarily, to other disciplines sharing an interest in the present and future practices of how IS develops, as well as set as core reading for those dealing with aspects of IS and BIS practice.